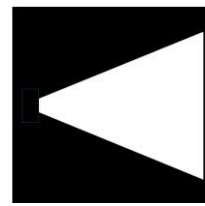


# Consideration Sets in Consumer Choice



## Research Papers

Gitungwa, H., & Gustafson, C. R. (2025). Consumers' beliefs about health and taste attributes of ready-to-eat breakfast cereals predict consideration of nutritionally differentiated subsets of products. *Food Quality and Preference*, 122, 105300. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodqual.2024.105300>

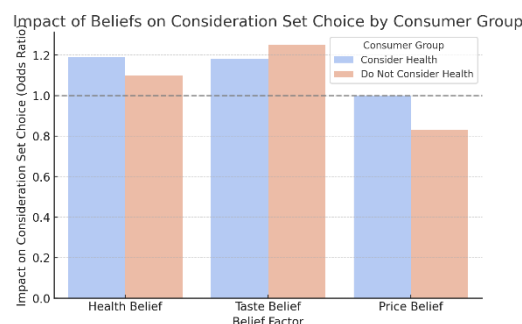
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## Overview

Consumers rarely evaluate all available options when making food choices; instead, they focus on a consideration set, influenced by their beliefs about health, taste, and price. This study examines how these beliefs shape attention in a complex choice environment. Findings suggest that taste and health beliefs significantly impact which products are considered, while price beliefs have little influence. Importantly, inaccurate health beliefs may prevent consumers from even considering healthier alternatives, reducing the effectiveness of interventions like nutrition labels, taxes, and subsidies.

## Key Findings & Insights

- Consumers limit their choice set based on beliefs: many consumers do not evaluate all available options, instead selecting a subset of products that align with their expectations of taste, health, and price.
- Taste beliefs drive attention more than health beliefs: while those who prioritize health actively seek out healthier options, taste is the strongest predictor of which products are included in a consideration set.
- Incomplete consideration weakens policy impact: interventions like nutrition labelling and price changes only work if consumers compare different options, but many consumers do not even see healthier products.
- Price beliefs do not significantly impact attention: although people assume healthier foods are more expensive, this perception did not meaningfully change which products they considered.
- Consumers who actively think about health have different consideration sets: those who consciously consider health include more nutrient-rich cereals, while others rely on taste as the primary decision factor.



## Methodology

Online experiment where 2,309 participants chose among 33 cereals categorized by nutritional quality. Participants were given choice sets and asked to select which subset they wanted to view before making a final choice. Beliefs about taste, health, and price were measured post-choice using a 10-point scale. A multinomial logistic regression was used to analyse the relationship between beliefs and choice set selection.

## Conclusion

Consumers' consideration sets play a crucial role in food choice, yet they are shaped by pre-existing beliefs rather than objective product comparisons. This has major implications for public health policies aiming to influence eating habits. If healthier products are not even considered, labels, taxes, and subsidies will have limited impact. Instead, interventions should focus on shifting attention early in the decision-making process, potentially through priming, educational campaigns, and reframing product categories to encourage more diverse consideration.